

December 2, 2021 Yakima Bull Trout Work Group Meeting

Notes prepared by Emily Smith from recording

Attendees:

Alex Conley (YBFWRB), Russ Byington, Todd Newsome, Shana Warehime (YN), Paul James (CWU), Mitch Long, Melissa Speeg (KCT), Perry Harvester, Marc Divens, Scott Kline, William Meyer, Anthony Fritts (WDFW), Pat Monk, Clint Wertz, Scott Willey, Richard Visser (BOR), Joel Freudenthal (Yakima Co), Michael Callahan (ECY), Cindy Raekes, Erin Kuttel, Craig Haskell, Jason Romine, Judy Neibauer, Jose Vazquez (USFWS), Kathryn Furr, Gary Torretta (USFS), Bob and Sue Mecklenburg, and John Reeves

Updates and announcements

Joel updated the group on the SF Tieton Bridge. He noted that field study and road survey are complete, they are working with the USFS now to match up the survey and parcel data, and that should be done in a few weeks. Following that, BOR and USFS should see plats in the next month. KVFF will do the final bridge design. Construction is planned for 2022.

Russ updated us that the bull trout rescued in 2021 are growing well at the hatchery. This year the fish seem to be growing at the same rate. They are on track for early June tagging and release. There have only been 3 mortalities since August. Todd updated the group that just after the first of the year, they should have NEPA documents completed for the reintroduction program.

Richard Visser noted that there was a technical meeting to review the Box Canyon mouth passage project designs.; they are currently working on compiling comment. The reservoir delta/sedimentation study was selected for funding by BOR's Technical Services Center. Work will begin early in the new year.

Alex led a discussion about the draft letter of support for the Upper Kachess River Restoration Project proposed to be sent on behalf of the Yakima Bull Trout Working Group. Alex displayed the letter and asked for any opposition or edits. It was noted to add in "high risk of expiration". Melissa let the group know that the USFS is currently working through the NEPA process and permitting and will most likely will have to do a wetland delineation. They are applying to the stream flow restoration grant which should cover most remaining costs except the relocation of the trailhead. Michael Callahan and Mitch Long (abstained) and all others present moved to support the letter going forward as edited, under Alex's signature.

10-year YBIP Planning

Richard displayed the YBIP 10-year bull trout section spreadsheet. He noted it is a working draft and they are looking for feedback. Priority actions include all 3 phases of the Kachess River Restoration project and Gold Creek work including postions but not all of the costs for instream, pond, and land acquisition elements. There is some existing funding in place, but they will need more funding with Gold Creek. Box Canyon habitat restoration, the initial phase of which is completed, was kept on the list to allow for future Box Canyon work. Scott noted that if passage is provided at the falls , we could use the funds for restoration of newly-accessible upstream areas. The group emphasized the need to maintain the Bull Trout Task Force (BTTF) and potentially add more money to keep a tech on through the winter

to do tech and database work. The WDFW BT program is looking to maintain funding; WDFW is also working to try to shift staff costs to their operating budget if feasible. The temporary passage program (BOR funding) and the Box Canyon Passage Project don't plan on asking for state YBIP. The Box Canyon project is currently at 60% design, but next steps in developing a funding package will be figured out as part of the KDRP project. The state is a partner in the Clear Creek Dam Fish Passage Project, which is moving towards construction. The SF Tieton Fish Passage project will hopefully start construction in 2022. The Yakama Nation Bull Trout Restoration and Monitoring is a 50-50 cost share between BOR and Ecology; all partners are looking to maintain the program. The YBFWRB contract for convening the Bull Trout Work Group and maintaining the Bull Trout Action Plan needs to be added to the YBIP 10 year list. Projects outside the habitat sub-committee are also documented. It looks like 13 million over 10 years, which is consistent with the bull trout program's average of 1.7 million per biennium. The group opened up for more discussion of projects that aren't on the list. Capacity should be addressed to hopefully get more for redd surveys and monitoring. Ahtanum and small tributaries to Keechelus also could use work. Richard will add a line for assessment work on tributaries; if you have the availability to take a leadership role in developing these projects, please reach out to Richard Visser.

Demographic Survey

Scott Kline led a discussion in what he is planning for the 2022 demographic surveys. The plan for next year is to continue Box Canyon surveys, and only do juveniles and not YOY surveys in Kachess; this hopefully will give more time to do surveys in the SF Tieton, and possibly Ahtanum, Deep, or Indian. There is a capacity issue as the available of volunteers often limit the number of demographic surveys that can be completed.

Redd Surveys

Marc Divens displayed the 2021 redd survey count and noted that the BTTF helped a lot with completing this year's surveys. The fire kept crews out of Rattlesnake and Deep Creek. NF Tieton had no visibility. This caused lower numbers there than previous years. The other populations were very similar to last year's counts. The iPad data collection is extremely beneficial; it gets the exact GPS points instantly mapped. The group noted it would be good if we could note why this year has a low count in the reports, so when we come back in a few years and forget, we can be reminded that the fire impacted the counts.

Clear Creek Dam

Clinton Wertz noted that the Clear Creek Dam Fish Passage Project is at the 90% design phase. Changes from the 60-90% include that the intake structure design is complete, there are 2 fish passage entries on the lower intake, and they will have minimal reservoir drawdown. Currently they are in the NEPA process. There is a meeting in January for the final comments. The cost estimate is about 10 million. Next steps include 90% design meeting, final comments, cost estimates, start work with public affairs regarding closures, and prepare 100% design and budget.

5 Year Review

Erin let the group know that the rangewide Bull Trout Species Status Assessment (SSA) review is underway, and we that we need to set up a 3-hour meeting to complete the next steps for the Yakima

Core Area (review of threats and demographic information) with her. Possible dates include Feb 3, 10, 4, and Jan 28th in the morning.

Library and BTAP Update

Alex let the group know that the links in the bull trout library links are all updated and working again. Please send Emily any additions to the library.

Alex displayed a draft of a wiki page that could be used to house the BTAP. It can be set up so only certain users can edit. It could be a useful way to have multiple people edit and during our meeting we can approve updates. The group opened up for conversation and the group agreed it should be something we look into.

The meeting concluded at 4 pm.